Government Initiatives

Responding to Women's Issues

Saskatchewan

Our Future is Wide Open

104-00734/

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Introduction

As part of the development of an *Action Plan for Saskatchewan Women*, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women Deb Higgins and officials from the Status of Women Office, consulted with women's groups to hear about their issues and concerns. Invitations were sent to a broad range of women's groups and groups that serve women, inviting them to respond to a questionnaire or to attend a one-day forum. Both the questionnaire and forum were designed to identify key issues and priorities for women.

This document outlines key issues identified by women through the consultation process as well as key government and crown sector initiatives that respond to the issues. While some of the initiatives are specific to women, some benefit particular groups of people, such as women and men with disabilities or Aboriginal women and men.

By making sure that gender-based analysis is incorporated into policy and program development, the Government of Saskatchewan is committed to ensuring that its initiatives are accessible and beneficial to diverse groups of both women and men.

GOAL 1 : Economic Equality and Security of All Saskatchewan Women

Issues Identified by the Women's Community	Key Government Initiatives
Improve social assistance benefits to cover the real cost-of-living	• Through the *Building Independence* initiatives, the government is building supports for families outside of the social assistance programs. • The Saskatchewan Income Plan will continue to provide for low-income seniors, most of whom are women.
Provide funding opportunities for women in business	• Through Saskatchewan Industry and Resources, the government provides the *Small Business Loans Association Program*, which has provided over $11 million in loans to female business owners and entrepreneurs since the program commenced in 1989. Last year, over $1.2 million was loaned to new and existing businesses that are owned or managed by women.
Create adjusted and flexible child tax credit	• The federal government has announced a further increase in the *National Child Benefit* for 2003-04. Effective January 1, 2003, the child tax credit increases from $2,000 to $2,500 per child. Saskatchewan has been a strong supporter of a National Child Benefit that acknowledges the cost of raising children.
Redesign the disability tax credit	• In 2001, the *Disability Tax Credit* was increased from $4,292 to $6,000, and each year the amounts will increase due to indexation of the tax system.
Create educational opportunities and flexible student loans for women who are single parents	• Saskatchewan Health offers an increased number of health science program training seats and bursaries, which have increased the opportunity for women's enrollment in a wide range of health related educational programs. • Several debt reduction benefits are available through Saskatchewan Learning including: - Canada and Saskatchewan Study Grants for Students with Dependants - Saskatchewan Bursaries - Canada Millennium Scholarship Grants • If students are having difficulty repaying a loan, there are additional benefits available including: - Interest Relief Plan - Debt Reduction in Repayment Plan • Single parents represent approximately 15% of student loan recipients in Saskatchewan. • There is also a *Permanent Disability Benefit* available to eligible students that are unable to meet their repayment obligations due to a permanent disability.

Issues Identified by the Women's Community	Key Government Initiatives
Provide work-based training programs that increase opportunities for women to participate in the workforce	• Saskatchewan Learning's *Job Start/Future Skills Program* assists individuals to receive full-time or part-time training and work experience in a variety of occupational areas. Forty-one percent of participants are women. The program has an overall post-program employment rate of 88%. • Saskatchewan Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs' *Aboriginal and Employment Development Program* facilitates partnerships that link employers to the Aboriginal community for employment development and workplace preparation. • Saskatchewan Corrections and Public Safety, through PRISM Industries, offers *Employment Skills* programs to female offenders. • The Saskatchewan Transportation Company (STC) is planning to increase involvement with work-based placement training through Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science & Technology (SIAST)/Tech schools in 2003-04. • SGI is involved with work placement programs throughout the province, such as Scott Collegiate's Regina program - *School to Work Program*, the FHQ Adult Learning Centre, the First Nations Employment Centre, the Gabriel Dumont Institute, Career Headways, and the Saskatchewan Abilities Council. • SaskTel participates in Co-op programs with the U of R and SIAST. SaskTel is also currently developing programs with Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology (SIIT) and SIFC. • SaskTel has work placements with partnering high schools and SIAST. • The provincial public service offers student work placements, and participates in Co-op programs. It also offers the Aboriginal Management and Professional Internship Program.
Create training opportunities that promote self-esteem and life skills development	• Saskatchewan Corrections and Public Safety delivers *Life Skills* programs to female inmates at the Pine Grove Correctional Centre and Young Offender Facilities. Life Skills programs include information about sexuality, self-esteem, anger management, job search, healthy body image, parenting, financial planning, career days, addictions/drugs and pro-social skills. • Saskatchewan Learning supports 88 *Community Schools*, which provide a variety of programs depending on the school's needs, including adult education in life skills, talking circles and leadership development. • The SaskTel Pioneers provide funding to send low-income, at-risk youth to the Planned Parenthood Regina *Young Women's Wellness Day Camps*. These camps provide assertiveness training and healthy choices training.

Issues Identified by the Women's Community	Key Government Initiatives
Recognize and give economic value to the unpaid work of women	• Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization financially supported the research project "Farm Family Work: Gender and Generation" that assessed the responsibilities and work distribution of farm family members.
Establish adequate pay for child care providers	• Saskatchewan Community Resources & Employment has committed $500,000 per year since 1999 to increase wages for child care workers in the licensed sector through targeted wage enhancement grants. This commitment will continue in 2003-04. • Child care providers are among the community-based organizations that benefit from a human resources enhancement package in 2003-04.
Ensure the availability of affordable housing	• There are currently 31,000 government assisted housing units in the province. A new cost-shared program with the federal government was announced in 2002 and will lead to the development of additional units of housing for low to moderate income families.
Improve access for women to management and non-traditional jobs	• Saskatchewan Learning offers the *Special Opportunity Grant for Women in Doctoral Studies* – providing a maximum $5,000 grant/year on a first-come, first-serve basis. To be eligible, a student must be enrolled in full-time doctoral studies in agriculture, biological sciences, engineering, applied sciences, mathematics or physical sciences. • The provincial public service has a variety of initiatives to improve access for women to management and under-represented jobs. Many government departments participate in job fairs that strive to encourage young women to consider a career in non-traditional occupations.
Provide project funding for non-government organizations and women's groups	• Since 2001, the office responsible for leading government on women's issues, has provided grants to support women's organizations and groups providing services to women, in hosting International Women's Day Grants. • Through the *Aboriginal Women's Program*, Saskatchewan Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs provides funding to provincial Aboriginal women's organizations.
Create training opportunities that promote self-esteem	• The *Ready for Work Program* through Saskatchewan Labour helps youth make a successful transition from school to work and promotes workplace safety. Program resources include a website (www.readyforwork.sk.ca), interactive teaching materials, modules, videos and publications.

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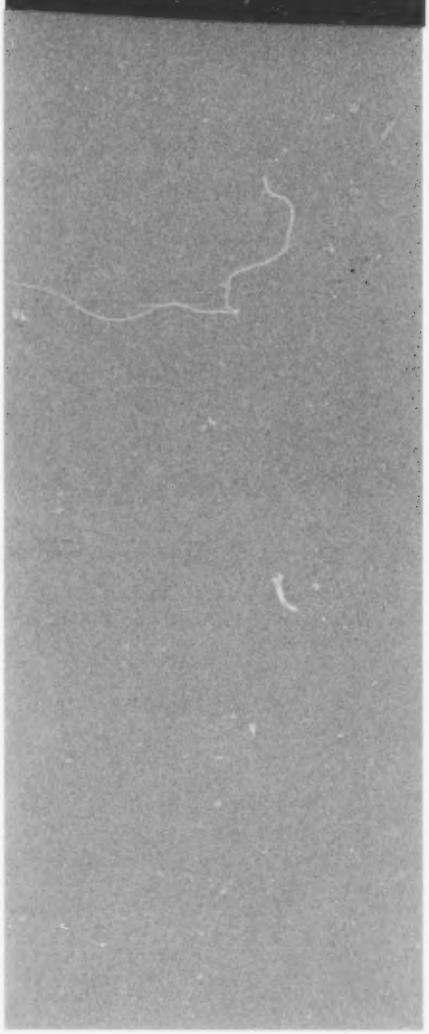
Goal 2 : Safety for All Saskatchewan Girls and Women In Their Homes, Schools, Institutions, Workplaces and Communities

Issues Identified by the Women's Community

Increase education and opportunities to "speak out" on domestic violence

Address the problem of relationship violence and the need for programs such as the Domestic Violence Response Systems



Key Government Initiatives

- *STOPS (Saskatchewan Towards Offering Partnerships Solutions) to Violence Program* is a province-wide initiative to address violence in the family. Partnerships include provincial government, community organizations, interest groups, advocacy groups and individuals who have an interest in working on issues of violence in the family. STOPS has eight local organizations and over 125 members. STOPS 2002-03 workplan focuses on providing information on relationship violence, developing provincial-level tools such as protocols, and a major conference on violence against young women was held in Regina this May.
- STOPS meets with the Interdepartmental Family Violence Committee quarterly. This meeting serves as a common table to discuss government and community initiatives/directions on family violence.
- Interdepartmental committees support work on family violence through the Interdepartmental Family Violence Committee, and work on child abuse through the Interdepartmental Child Abuse Committee. These committees help to integrate government approaches to support appropriate interventions, research, development of protocols.
- Government has sponsored community forums, attended predominantly by women, on issues such as the use of restorative justice in situations of relationship violence and victimization which helps guide the development of government policy.
- Victim Services has continued to work at local community levels throughout the province to deliver training on "Justice's Response to Domestic Violence." This has given communities opportunities to develop partnerships between agencies and communities, on how best to assist those who become victims of domestic violence at a local level.
- A large majority of individuals working at the local level to provide justice-related services to victims of crime are women. Through Victims Services, the government brings these individuals together once or twice a year to discuss issues, provide input into policy development and receive training. Government is trying to ensure that the women's voices and opinions are heard regarding the issue of relationship violence and government decisions regarding violence.
- Saskatchewan Justice is a key player in the implementation of *RESOLVE Saskatchewan (Research and Education for Solutions to Violence and Abuse)*, one component of a tri-provincial research network working in the area of family violence and abuse, focusing on violence against women and the effectiveness of current responses to the issue of family violence.
- In 2002-03, Saskatchewan Government Relations & Aboriginal Affairs, through the Aboriginal Women's Program, provided $50,000 to the *Prairie Action Foundation (RESOLVE)* for research on solutions to violence and abuse particular to Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan.
- Saskatchewan Justice funds the *Domestic Violence Early Intervention Program* through Family Service Regina, as well as eight holistic Aboriginal family violence programs targeted to Aboriginal families in five urban centres in Saskatchewan. They also sponsor three *Children Who Witness Domestic Violence programs.*

Issues Identified by the Women's Community	Key Government Initiatives
Increase education and opportunities to "speak out" on domestic violence Address the problem of relationship violence and the need for programs such as the Domestic Violence Response Systems	• Saskatchewan Learning provides public schools with health education curriculum that addresses issues such as respect and relationships, family and community violence, family structure, roles and responsibilities and dating. All provincial curricula emphasize gender equity in all subject areas for all grades. • Saskatchewan Learning also provides the *Caring and Respectful Schools* initiative to assist schools in promoting the personal and social development of all students. • Through the Saskatoon Police, RCMP, Prince Albert Police and Family Service Regina, SaskTel sponsors the *Cell Arm/Emergency Cellular Program* that provides emergency cell service to high risk clients.
Create stronger and enforced stalking laws	• Saskatchewan, along with other jurisdictions, supported increasing the penalty for stalking to a maximum of ten years, which was included in *The Criminal Code* change enacted last summer.
Ensure the enforcement of privacy legislation to protect women at personal risk	• *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOI) and The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (LAFOI)* protect the information of Saskatchewan residents collected by the government or local authority.
Provide for safe, adequate respite care and an effective support network for care givers	• Regional Health Authorities providing respite care in homes, licensed special-care homes and adult day programs. • Primary Health Care Networks will offer respite care and adult day care; home care and support for informal care givers.
Increase rural safety resources and identification of support networks	• The *Grow Up With Safety Program* is an Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) project developing health and safety resources that support the elementary level (grade 1 - 9) health education curriculum in Saskatchewan schools. AITC and Saskatchewan Labour coordinate the project through a multi-agency steering committee. • Saskatchewan Labour also publishes the annual Farm Safety Calendar which educates young people and their families about hazards associated with farming. It is distributed widely to schools and agencies across the province.

Issues Identified by the Women's Community	Key Government Initiatives
Develop emergency benefits and a system of support for women leaving abusive relationships Improve access to shelters for women with disabilities, for immigrant, refugee and visible minority women, and for Aboriginal/Metis women	• Saskatchewan Community Resources & Employment funds ten women's shelters with a residential capacity for 157 bed spaces and 19 emergency spaces, which provide emergency safe housing for women and children leaving an abusive relationship. Transition house services include short-term safe shelter, crisis and support counseling, child care and referrals to community services. New provincial resources are being directed to providing sustainable funding for staffing in emergency crisis shelters. • Saskatchewan Housing Corporation provides forgivable loans for renovations to existing emergency shelters or second-stage housing for women and child victims of family violence. • The major project for the SaskTel Pioneers in 2003 is provision of $30,000 in cash, labour and in-kind donations for the new building to be erected for the *North Central Family Centre* in Regina. • SaskTel partners with the Provincial Association of Transition Houses to sponsor their *Abuse Help Lines* page in all ten of the district SaskTel phone directories.
Provide access to quality parenting skills education	• Saskatchewan Justice, through Family Justice Services Branch, provides province-wide access to parenting education classes dealing with the stages of divorce and separation and dealing with the child's needs during separation and divorce. The department is piloting mandatory parenting education classes in Saskatoon and Yorkton. • *Kids First Program* – a joint venture between the departments of Learning, Community Resources & Employment, Health and Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs, supports vulnerable families in developing the capacity to nurture their children. The program focuses on services for children, prenatal to age five, and their families. Emphasis is placed on the prevention of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Effects (FASE). • Saskatchewan Learning also encourages parent participation in the 88 designated Community Schools and 89 prekindergarten programs it supports, which often includes parenting education opportunities. • Saskatchewan Community Resources & Employment's *Parent Aide Program* provides targeted parenting education for families at risk. • Saskatchewan Corrections and Public Safety provides parenting education specific to Aboriginal Women through the Pine Grove Correctional Centre, as well as in-house parenting classes specific to young mothers at all young offenders facilities with female units. • The SaskTel Pioneers is a program that provides volunteers and supplies for the *Regina Home Economics for Living Program*, teaching cooking skills to low-income single Moms and their children.

Issues Identified by the Women's Community	Key Government Initiatives
Provide access to quality parenting skills education	• SaskTel sponsors the *Dream Network Healthy Parenting Program*, a partnership program that provides education on positive parenting. The program's mission is to support healthy parenting programs that teach parents the knowledge and skills necessary to care for their children during the critical growing years from birth to age five. This year, the SaskTel Dream Network is supporting two parenting programs offered by the Regina Food Bank Life Skills Program, the *Child Care Training Program* and the *Parents Forever Program*. • SaskTel has provided funding for the Saskatchewan Institute on Prevention of Handicaps' new Healthy Parenting website (www.healthyparenting.sk.ca). More than 2000 people have completed the Healthy Parenting Home Study Program online. • SaskTel sponsors the *Parenting Plus Program* in the Pipestone Health District, a voluntary program that provides information to parents to support their parenting needs. This program can accommodate 30 families per year.
Increase awareness of community resources	• Saskatchewan Learning developed the *Planning for Action: An Implementation Handbook for Our Children, Our Communities and Our Future* (March 2001) – to facilitate equitable opportunity and benefit within Saskatchewan's education system. The *Community Schools Program*, a key feature of *School*^{Plus} – is a strong provincial commitment to support equity, diversity and inclusion in the school system. • Saskatchewan Labour, through the Status of Women Office produces and distributes a *Saskatchewan Women's Directory*. This is also available on line at www.swo.gov.sk.ca • Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization developed Connections, a directory of information for farm and rural people in Saskatchewan (*http://www.agr.gov.sk.ca* or phone 1-866-680-0006). As well, individuals will receive information on community resources when they call the Farm Stress Line (1-800-667-4442).
Ensure safety in the workplace	• Under occupational health and safety legislation, Saskatchewan Labour enforces the anti-harassment provision, protection from chemical substances for pregnant workers and the requirement for a written policy to address the risk of violence in the workplace. • Saskatchewan Labour consults with farm women on occupational health and safety on the farm through the Farm Health and Safety Council.

Goal 3 : Health and Well-being for All Saskatchewan Women

Issues Identified by the Women's Community	Key Government Initiatives
Provide assistance to families to cover all medication and health care costs. Improve access to birth control information and low-cost birth control	• Through Saskatchewan Health, the *Special Support Program* of the Saskatchewan Drug Plan provides Saskatchewan residents assistance with drug costs greater than 3.4% of their income. • Through Saskatchewan Health, the *Family Health Benefit Plan* assists low-income working families to cover the cost of health care for children including eyeglasses, dental work, special medical needs, medications and chiropractics. • The *Advisory Committee on Family Planning* was appointed to make recommendations to the Minister of Health on reproductive and sexual health. • The *Advisory Committee on Family Planning* and *Regional Health Authorities* fund a number of teen wellness centres in the province.
Create opportunities for alternative and traditional healing practices for people of Aboriginal descent	• Through Saskatchewan Corrections and Public Safety, the government is focused on enhancing cultural programming in youth and adult correctional facilities in conjunction with Aboriginal communities. Facilities have access to Elder services, sweat lodge ceremonies, female sharing circles and traditional healing practices. • Saskatchewan Justice and Saskatchewan Corrections and Public Safety are establishing a *Traditional Elders Advisory Committee.* • Saskatchewan Health's *Northern Health Strategy* and implementation of the *Primary Care Networks* will provide for further development and integration of alternative and traditional healing practices and the involvement of elders.
Ensure that all women have equal access to pregnancy termination	• Saskatchewan respects the laws of Canada and the 1988 Supreme Court of Canada decision on the right of an individual to access therapeutic abortion services. If a therapeutic abortion is necessary, it will be provided in a safe environment where professional care and counseling services are available.
Ensure that low income adults have access to free basic dental care	• Adults receiving social assistance may be eligible for *supplementary health benefits* which includes access to basic dental care.

Issues Identified by the Women's Community	Key Government Initiatives
Increase the availability of education and funding for self-care and prevention of injuries	• Saskatchewan Health provides funding to the *Saskatchewan Institute on the Prevention of Handicaps* to: - Conduct prevention, education, awareness raising and community development initiatives. - Focus on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and FAS Effects (FASE). - Educate women, families and communities about the dangers of drinking alcohol during pregnancy. • Saskatchewan Health provides funding for a *Provincial Diabetes Strategy* that recognizes the disproportionately higher incidence among First Nations women and is designed to address diabetes surveillance, primary prevention, care, treatment, personal self-management, and community supports. • Saskatchewan Health provides programs specific to women's needs including the Prevention Program on Cervical Cancer, the Breast Cancer Screening Program for women ages 50-69, and the Bone Mineral Density Testing program for the treatment of osteoporosis in women.
Acknowledge and address the specific health needs of Aboriginal women	• Saskatchewan Health is continuing with the development of a *Northern Health Strategy* in partnership with northern health regions, the Northern Inter-tribal Health Authority, and Health Canada. • Saskatchewan Health participates in the Government of Saskatchewan's *Metis & Off-Reserve Strategy* to ensure improved health status of Aboriginal women and men in Saskatchewan.
Provide culturally appropriate care for women	• Whenever possible, Regional Health Authorities provide health services in a culturally appropriate manner. For example, the Regina Qu'Appelle Regional Health Authority offers a *Native Health Services Centre* in the Regina General Hospital, and the new hospital being constructed in Fort Qu'Appelle will offer space for *First Nations Health Services*, including a spiritual centre, shared vision centre and winter healing lodge. • To deal with situations where patients are unable to communicate in English with health professionals or regional health authority staff, Regional Health Authorities customarily obtain the assistance of interpreters to provide translation services when necessary. Regional Health Authorities typically maintain a list of staff members and persons in a local community who can be contacted to provide such linguistic services when needed. • In regions where there is a significant non-English linguistic community, Regional Health Authorities attempt to recruit clinical and other staff with these language skills.

Goal 4 : Equitable Participation of Women in Leadership and Decision-making Roles in All Sectors of Society and the Economy

Issues Identified by the Women's Community

Provide training and support programs as well as skill development to assist women in obtaining profitable careers and participating in society as decision makers

Key Government Initiatives

- With support from Saskatchewan Learning, provincial post-secondary institutions are developing on-line courses, programs and related services. Women with family responsibilities, job demands, and those located in rural and Northern communities may particularly benefit from these expanded choices.
- Through Saskatchewan Northern Affairs, the *Northern Development Fund* provides northerners grant funding for organizational and business skills development. Grants to support workshops and seminars on developing business management skills, increasing business and economic development knowledge, developing and managing community organizations and improving the planning and development skills of volunteer boards of directors.
- The Government of Saskatchewan will work with community organizations to establish The *Rural Leadership Development Program*, with special emphasis on women, Aboriginal peoples and youth.
- The government partners with the Saskatchewan Council for Community Development to enable communities to participate in the *Leadership Saskatchewan Program*. This initiative gives people the information and skills to implement new development projects and programs in their communities.
- The *Family Literacy Program*, implemented through Saskatchewan Learning, supports healthy children and families. Twenty-five percent of individuals involved in the programs are children, and 75% of the adults involved are women. Nearly 2,200 individuals are projected to participate in the programs in 2002-03.
- The Basic Education Program provides opportunities for adults who have not completed high school with the opportunity to upgrade their academic credentials and opens up additional opportunities for the program participants. As well, *General Educational Development (GED)* tests offer adults the opportunity to obtain an equivalency Grade 12 standing. Fifty percent of individuals writing the exams are women.
- SaskTel sponsors the *Girls Exploring Trades & Techonology (GETT) Program* that provides young women with an opportunity to explore trades and technology careers.

Provide student financial assistance, scholarships, honoraria, and/or bursaries that assist women to obtain training and education that will improve their economic security and influence as decision-makers

- The *Canada-Saskatchewan Study Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities*, through Saskatchewan Learning, provides grants up to $10,000 annually to full or part-time students to cover exceptional education costs related to the student's disability.
- The *Canada Study Grant for High Needs Students with Permanent Disabilities*, through Saskatchewan Learning, provides up to $2,000 annually to full or part-time students.
- The *Canada-Saskatchewan Special Opportunity Grant for High Need Part-time Students*, through Saskatchewan Learning, provides a maximum of $2,000 grant per year on a first-come, first-serve basis. The majority of recipients are single-parent women.

Issues Identified by the Women's Community	Key Government Initiatives
Provide student financial assistance, scholarships, honoraria, and/or bursaries that assist women to obtain training and education that will improve their economic security and influence as decision-makers	• *The Provincial Training Allowance (PTA)*, provided through Saskatchewan Learning, is a grant-funding program for low-income adult clients enrolled in basic education and bridging programs. About two-thirds of recipients are women, receiving about three-quarters of the budget. • Saskatchewan Health provides bursary programs to support recruitment and retention of health professionals in Saskatchewan. The majority of the bursaries awarded were provided to women. In 2003/04 the province is providing $4 million for return-service training bursaries to support retention and recruitment. • Crown Investments Corporation (CIC) provides an annual bursary to the University of Regina and one bursary to University of Saskatchewan for Aboriginal students.
Provide day care and/or elder care services and subsidies to assist women while obtaining educational training or participating in the workforce	• Individualized funding is an option of the health region home care program that provides funding (based on assessed need) to a person to arrange and manage their own support services, rather than receiving the services directly from home care. This option is designed to provide people with increased choice and flexibility in the way their needs are met through the home care program. Individuals take on the responsibility of hiring, training, scheduling, and terminating their own staff, managing payroll, following applicable legislation, and reporting to the health region. • The provincial government recently announced the largest investment in child care in the history of the province. This year alone, 500 new licensed child care spaces are being created. In addition, child care subsidies, grants and capital funding to centers are all being increased. Families will have more options for the early learning and care of their children. • A 2002-03 enhancement of $1.7M was directed to development of new child care spaces to assist families moving from welfare to the work force, addressing access and innovative services for children and families with special needs, and additional operating funds to enhance wages of child care providers. • Government grants to licensed child care centres and homes, and subsidies are provided to low-income families who use these services. There is a child care payment in the provincial training allowance, and qualifying students receive a child care component in their student loans. • The *Saskatchewan Child Benefit* and the *Saskatchewan Employment Supplement* assist low-income parents with the direct costs of raising children, including the costs of child care.

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Provide student financial assistance, scholarships, honoraria, and/or bursaries that assist women to obtain training and education that will improve their economic security and influence as decision-makers	• The *Canada-Saskatchewan Study Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities*, through Saskatchewan Learning, provides grants up to $10,000 annually to full or part-time students to cover exceptional education costs related to the student's disability. • The *Canada Study Grant for High Needs Students with Permanent Disabilities*, through Saskatchewan Learning, provides up to $2,000 annually to full or part-time students. • The *Canada-Saskatchewan Special Opportunity Grant for High Need Part-time Students*, through Saskatchewan Learning, provides a maximum of $2,000 grant per year on a first-come, first-serve basis. The majority of recipients are single-parent women.

Issues Identified by the Women's Community	Key Government Initiatives
Provide student financial assistance, scholarships, honoraria, and/or bursaries that assist women to obtain training and education that will improve their economic security and influence as decision-makers	• *The Provincial Training Allowance (PTA)*, provided through Saskatchewan Learning, is a grant-funding program for low-income adult clients enrolled in basic education and bridging programs. About two-thirds of recipients are women, receiving about three-quarters of the budget. • Saskatchewan Health provides bursary programs to support recruitment and retention of health professionals in Saskatchewan. The majority of the bursaries awarded were provided to women. In 2003/04 the province is providing $4 million for return-service training bursaries to support retention and recruitment. • Crown Investments Corporation (CIC) provides an annual bursary to the University of Regina and one bursary to University of Saskatchewan for Aboriginal students.
Provide day care and/or elder care services and subsidies to assist women while obtaining educational training or participating in the workforce	• Individualized funding is an option of the health region home care program that provides funding (based on assessed need) to a person to arrange and manage their own support services, rather than receiving the services directly from home care. This option is designed to provide people with increased choice and flexibility in the way their needs are met through the home care program. Individuals take on the responsibility of hiring, training, scheduling, and terminating their own staff, managing payroll, following applicable legislation, and reporting to the health region. • The provincial government recently announced the largest investment in child care in the history of the province. This year alone, 500 new licensed child care spaces are being created. In addition, child care subsidies, grants and capital funding to centers are all being increased. Families will have more options for the early learning and care of their children. • A 2002-03 enhancement of $1.7M was directed to development of new child care spaces to assist families moving from welfare to the work force, addressing access and innovative services for children and families with special needs, and additional operating funds to enhance wages of child care providers. • Government grants to licensed child care centres and homes, and subsidies are provided to low-income families who use these services. There is a child care payment in the provincial training allowance, and qualifying students receive a child care component in their student loans. • The *Saskatchewan Child Benefit* and the *Saskatchewan Employment Supplement* assist low-income parents with the direct costs of raising children, including the costs of child care.

Issues Identified by the Women's Community	Key Government Initiatives
Increase support for pre-school programs that improve childhood development and educational attainment	• Through Saskatchewan Learning, the government supports 89 pre-kindergarten programs targeting over 1,400 vulnerable three and four year olds in urban, rural and Northern communities. Saskatchewan Learning and Saskatchewan Community Resources & Employment are collaborating on a blended early learning and care strategy for children ages 0-6. The federal-provincial/territorial agreement will provide $900,000 in 2003-04. This initiative will complement the *Early Childhood Development Initiative* managed by Saskatchewan Learning, Saskatchewan Health, Saskatchewan Government Relations & Aboriginal Affairs and Saskatchewan Community Resources & Employment. • Through Saskatchewan Community Resources & Employment, the government supports: - Licensed child care centres and family child care homes. - Preschool projects in LaLoche and Prince Albert (partnership with Saskatchewan Learning). - *Teen and Young Parent Program* - *Early Childhood Intervention Program (ECIP)* for children with developmental delays. • Prevention and Support Grants through Saskatchewan's *Action Plan for Children* also support a number of community-based initiatives for preschool children and their families.
Provide mentoring and role model opportunities that assist women in attaining education and training	• Saskatoon Regional Health Authority provides a *Mentoring Workshop* for senior nurses who mentor nursing students. • Saskatchewan Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs participates in various mentoring programs. • The Saskatchewan Public Service Commission established the *Aboriginal Management and Professional Internship Program (AMPIP)*. Launched in 2001, the program will prepare Aboriginal candidates for work in the public service, develop role models and ensure a more supportive work environment for Aboriginal employees. • In 2003, Crown Investments Corporation, has committed to the placement of a minimum of 4 coop students, to be reviewed annually. • Information Services Corporation provides mentors for two *Adult Learning Centre (ALC)* students per session. These ALC students are obtaining their GED and are predominantly Aboriginal. • SaskTel *Aboriginal Employees Network* has a mentorship program. • SaskTel provides mentorship/role modeling activities in their partner high schools. • SaskTel's work placement program provides mentorship within the workplace. • SaskTel is the founding partner of *In-Roads* (an Internship Program focusing on Aboriginal Candidates). • SaskTel is involved in the development of the *Community Based Mentorship Program*, located at Scott Collegiate, to mentor at-risk youth.

Issues Identified by the Women's Community	Key Government Initiatives
Create working conditions that are flexible to the multiple roles and responsibilities of women in order to increase the ability of women to participate in decision making roles	• Saskatchewan Health established a *Principle Nursing Advisor* to focus on recruitment and retention issues of nurses in Saskatchewan. • Saskatchewan Health created the *Saskatchewan Nursing Council* in March 2000. The Council appointed three working groups to look at work life issues, casualization of work and retention of nursing students. • Two Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI) *Corporate Scholarships* of $2,500 each were awarded annually focusing on individuals involved in community service, extracurricular activity or balancing work, family and school. • The Balancing Work and Family Unit of Saskatchewan Labour provides leadership and co-ordinates government activities to help people balance their work and family responsibilities. The unit works with business, labour and community organizations to help them develop and implement work and family strategies.
Increase the number of women in management and non-traditional roles	• The provincial public service has a variety of initiatives to increase the number of women in management and non-traditional roles. As examples, Saskatchewan Environment has a Mentoring Program for employees to explore general career development; Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation established a women's committee, *WINTO (Women in Non-traditional Occupations)*, to increase women's representation in the department. WINTO's initiatives include mentoring and gender sensitivity training. • Special outreach programs at SGI have been instituted to encourage applications from women from designated groups such as Aboriginal, women with disabilities and visible minorities. • CIC Crown corporations have Employment Equity/Diversity Programs. • Executive government has had an Employment Equity/Diversity program since 1989, and undertakes a wide variety of initiatives to improve representation in the workplace, including designating positions for equity groups including women.
Develop employment strategies that acknowledge the unique needs and challenges of people with disabilities	• Through Saskatchewan Learning, the *Employability Assistance for People with Disabilities (EAPD) Program* assists people with disabilities to prepare for, secure and maintain employment by funding a flexible range of disability-related supports, programs, services and equipment. In 2002-03, the EAPD Program assisted 1,142 people, 44% of whom were women. • Saskatchewan Community Resources & Employment provided $500,000 in new funding for employment supports for the disabled in 2002-03, and will provide $2million in 2003-04. • The Community Living Division of Saskatchewan Community Resources & Employment meet needs of individuals with disabilities and their families. • Crown corporations such as SGI, ISC and SaskTel incorporate accessibility policies into their interviewing, hiring and employment strategies.

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Facilitate the use of gender-based analysis & diversity training in the government policy and program decision making process	• All of the Advisors on Women's Policy receive Gender-Based Analysis training to assist them to incorporate a gender perspective into their work.
Increase public awareness on how government works so that women can provide better input	• Saskatchewan Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs partnered with the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC) and the Saskatchewan Public Service Commission (PSC) in developing the *Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Program (ACAP)*. The program provides a co-ordinated approach to cross-cultural relations by increasing understanding and appreciation for Aboriginal people in an effort to improve relationships in the workplace. • In 2002, public communication around the *Building Independence* initiatives (i.e. Saskatchewan Employment Supplement, Family Health Benefits) was significantly enhanced. This is expected to raise awareness of these programs for low-income families, many of which are headed by single parent females, and increase participation rates.

Contact Us!

If you have any comments on this publication or would like more information, please contact us at:

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